

Topics: Social Media Research

ENG 6939
Dr. Anastasia Salter
Fall 2020

Office: Virtual: on Slack and via Zoom
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Asynchronous
Via Webcourses
3 Units

Course Description

Social media is a key contemporary site of activity for politics, entertainment, and relationships, but how can we study it? This course combines theory and practice; students will both read canonical and contemporary social media research from leading scholars and learn to engage with social media platforms to collect and analyze their own data. PR: Graduate standing or C.I.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Gain an understanding of key concepts for research on social media, through examining and reflecting upon the practice of others.
- Become conversant with canonical and contemporary scholarship in social media research.
- Recognize and navigate key ethical questions in social media research.
- Learn data collection and analysis tools for select platforms.
- Explore options in data visualization for both analysis and communication
- Develop an understanding of how to approach any platform through open source tools.
- Build confidence with selecting and implementing existing scripts and tools for data collection

From fan communities and discourse about works of literature to meme-makers skewering cultural objects, online spaces enable readership, creation, circulation, and transformation of humanist texts – and the active making and remaking of public history. Social media platforms are the space to study a range of discourse, particularly in this time of collective reliance due to physical distancing. This course will both use social media for course content and community (delivered through asynchronous modules, and supported by a Slack channel for discussions and questions) and as a site of research.

Required Texts

Jackson, Sarah J., Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles. *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*. MIT Press, 2020.

Available online open access at:

<https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/4597/HashtagActivismNetworks-of-Race-and-Gender-Justice>

Florini, Sarah. *Beyond hashtags: Racial politics and Black digital networks*. Vol. 19. NYU Press, 2019.

Available online open access at: <http://opensquare.nyupress.org/books/9781479892464/read/>

All other readings will be provided as links or PDFs within the Webcourses modules. We will be using some materials produced for the NEH Understanding Digital Culture Institute hosted by T&T in summer 2020.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignments

| | | |
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| 15 points | Engagement | Self-Assessed |
| | Course engagement is measured through a self-assessment at the end of the semester, in consultation with the instructor. Engagement includes regular participation in Slack; seeking help and mentorship throughout the semester; demonstrating knowledge of readings and course materials; and supporting peer learning. | |
| 15 points | Preliminary Data Collection and Analysis | October 5 |
| | Students will collect data on a current hashtag, video, subreddit, or video network using one of the simple tools provided and write a 3-5 page summary of preliminary findings, drawing on a combination of visualization tools and methods. | |
| 15 points | Advanced Analysis | November 1 |
| | Students will collect data on a platform using a scraper script from the suggested tools (or another scraper approved by the instructor) and write a 3-5 page summary of preliminary findings, drawing on a combination of visualization tools and methods. | |
| 20 points | Study Proposal | November 15 |
| | Using the tools for one of the platforms under examination, or a proposed set of tools for another platform, students will propose a targeted study with a clear research question, timeframe, and methodology. Study proposals should be approximately 2-4 pages long. | |
| 10 points | Peer Proposal Feedback | November 22 |
| | Keeping in mind the stated goals and research questions, each student will provide feedback and suggestions to one peer regarding their proposed study. Pay particular attention to scope and methodology. | |
| 25 points | Preliminary Study Findings | December 7 |
| | Using the tools chosen, students will draft the findings of their study, including a brief literature review and methods section grounding the preliminary findings. Study findings should be approximately 6-7 pages long. | |
| 100 points | Total | |

Grading Scale (%)

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| 94-100 A | 80-83 B- | 67-69 D+ |
| 90-93 A- | 77-79 C+ | 64-66 D |
| 87-89 B+ | 74-76 C | 60-63 D- |
| 84-86 B | 70-73 C- | 0 - 59 F |

Format and COVID-19

This course has been migrated to an asynchronous format as part of the University of Central Florida's response to COVID-19. Given both the international pandemic and local challenges, the following guidelines will be in place for class meetings and communication:

- Given the course's emphasis on using social media platforms, ongoing discussion is encouraged asynchronously via Slack. Every week will include specific prompts to start the conversation. While participation on Slack is not formally graded on a week-by-week basis, it is one way to demonstrate engagement. If you prefer to not use your real name on Slack, please contact me directly with your alias. Engagement will be measured through our one-on-one discussions, your responsiveness to peers and prompts, and your willingness to ask questions and demonstrate specific knowledge of course readings. Engagement will be self-assessed at the end of the semester.
- Office hour assistance is available both through text on Slack, Webcourses messages, and via Zoom: Zoom is recommended for advanced technical problems, where screen-sharing might be helpful to resolving errors.
- All course materials are asynchronous, using a mix of video and text as appropriate. Students are encouraged to use the provided Slack channel for follow-up questions, and to assist their peers with technical questions as well as research questions to build their own skills in these areas.
- Students will need access to a reliable internet connection and computer, with the capacity to install software, in order to participate fully in class assignments. A Chromebook or tablet will not be sufficient to install the types of scripting tools required for these exercises and social media research in general. If at any time this becomes a difficulty, please reach out to the instructor immediately.
- Given the nature of this semester, late work will be accepted up to the date of the next assignment deadline. The deadlines noted for each exercise are flexible, although you are encouraged to submit in a timely manner to receive feedback and progress. However, this policy excludes the study proposal and peer review feedback, as late submission of these assignments would impede collective progress.
- In the event of an emergency or medical challenge, additional flexibility beyond these provisions is always available. Thus if an extension is required beyond these guidelines, or a lengthy absence from asynchronous and synchronous conversation is anticipated, students should reach out to the instructor as soon as feasible to form a plan. As assignments built on one another, assignments should be completed and submitted in the listed sequence.

General Policies

- During the first week, there is a required **Academic Activity Verification**, due August 28 by 11:59pm.
 - Faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. To document that you began this course, please complete the Academic Activity Verification by the end of the first week of classes, or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid. This is required even for students who do not receive financial aid.
- **Grades will be reported via Webcourses.** All work must be submitted through Webcourses.
- All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. Also, any sources consulted for your writing must be properly documented.

“Rewriting,” in which a student consults a source, changes a few words, and presents the ideas as his/her own, is plagiarism. **Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an assignment will result at least in an “F” for that assignment** and may also lead to an “F” for the entire course.

Plagiarism and cheating subjects a student to referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>).

- The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable **accommodations for persons with disabilities**. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Accessibility Services, Ferrell Commons, Bldg. F7, Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, sas@ucf.edu, before requesting accommodations.

Weekly Schedule

| Week | Start Date | Reading | Assignment |
|------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | August 24 Introduction | <p>boyd, danah, and Nicole B. Ellison. 2008. “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship.” <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i> 13 (1): 210–30.</p> <p>Baym, Nancy K., and danah boyd. 2012. “Socially Mediated Publicness: An Introduction.” <i>Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media</i> 56 (3): 320–29. doi:10.1080/08838151.2012.705200.</p> <p>Orgad, Shani. “How Can Researchers Make Sense of the Issues involved in Collecting and Interpreting Online and Offline Data?” In <i>Internet Inquiry: Conversations about Method</i>, edited by Annette Markham and Nancy K. Baym, 33-53. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008.</p> | Academic Activity Verification |
| 2 | August 31 st Platforms | <p>Gillespie, Tarleton. “The Politics of ‘Platforms.’” <i>New Media & Society</i> 12, no. 3 (2010). https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444809342738</p> <p>Manovich, Lev. “Trending: The Promises and Challenges of Big Social Data.” Manovich.net, 2011, PDF</p> <p>Hashtag Activism: Introduction</p> | |

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| | | Beyond Hashtags: Introduction | |
| 3 | September 7 Preliminary Data Tools | <p>Hashtag Activism: Chapter 1</p> <p>Navar-Gill, Annemarie, and Mel Stanfill. ““We Shouldn’t Have to Trend to Make you Listen”: Queer Fan Hashtag Campaigns as Production Interventions.” <i>Journal of Film and Video</i> 70, 3-4 (2018): 85-100. doi: 10.5406/jfilmvideo.70.3-4.0085</p> <p>Steele, Catherine Knight. “Black Bloggers and their Varied Publics: The Everyday Politics of Black Discourse Online.” <i>Television & New Media</i> 19, 2 (2018): 112-127. doi: 10.1177/1527476417709535</p> <p>Blodgett, Bridget, and Anastasia Salter. “<i>Ghostbusters</i> is for Boys: Understanding Geek Masculinity’s Role in the Alt-Right.” <i>Communication, Culture & Critique</i> 11(2018): 133-146. doi: 10.1093/ccc/tcx003.</p> | |
| 4 | September 14 Orange | <p>Hashtag Activism: Chapter 2</p> <p>Introduction: Burgess, Jean, and Nancy Baym. <i>Twitter: A Biography</i>. https://s3.amazonaws.com/supadu-imgix/ingram-nyu/pdfs/introduction/9781479811069_intro.pdf</p> <p>Beyond Hashtags: Chapter 1</p> <p>Pennington, Diane Rasmussen. “Coding of Non-Text Data.” In <i>The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods</i>, edited by Luke Sloan and Anabel Quan-Haase, 232-250. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2016. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473983847.n15</p> | |
| 5 | September 21 Gephi | Hashtag Activism: Chapter 3 | |

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| | | <p>Driscoll, Kevin, and Shawn Walker. "Working Within a Black Box: Transparency in the Collection and Production of Big Twitter Data." <i>International Journal of Communication</i> 8, (2014): 20.</p> <p>Baym, Nancy K. "What Constitutes Quality in Qualitative Internet Research?" In <i>Internet Inquiry: Conversations about Method</i>, edited by Nancy K. Baym and Annette M. Markham, 173-189. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.</p> <p>Baym, Nancy K., and Annette M. Markham (eds). "Introduction: Making Smart Choices on Shifting Ground." In <i>Internet Inquiry: Conversations about Method</i>, vii-xix. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.</p> | |
| 6 | <p>September 28</p> <p>Git / GitHub</p> | <p>Hashtag Activism: Chapter 4</p> <p>Beyond Hashtags: Chapter 2</p> <p>Newton, Olivia B., and Mel Stanfill. "My NSFW video has partial occlusion: deepfakes and the technological production of non-consensual pornography." <i>Porn Studies</i> (2019): 1-17.</p> <p>Salter, Anastasia. "Plundered Hearts: Infocom, Romance, and the History of Feminist Game Design." <i>Feminist Media Histories</i> 6.1 (2020): 66-92</p> <p>Winter, Rachel, and Anastasia Salter. "DeepFakes: uncovering hardcore open source on GitHub." <i>Porn Studies</i> (2019): 1-16.</p> | |
| 7 | <p>October 5</p> <p>Advanced Reddit Scraping</p> | <p>Hashtag Activism: Chapter 5</p> <p>Beyond Hashtags: Chapter 3</p> <p>Massanari, Adrienne L. "'Come for the period comics. Stay for the cultural awareness': reclaiming the troll identity through feminist humor on</p> | Preliminary Data Collection and Analysis (10/5) |

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| | | <p>Reddit's/r/TrollXChromosomes." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i> 19.1 (2019): 19-37.</p> <p>Marwick, Alice E., and Robyn Caplan. "Drinking male tears: Language, the manosphere, and networked harassment." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i> 18.4 (2018): 543-559.</p> | |
| 8 | October 12 Intro to Ethics | <p>Hashtag Activism: Chapter 6</p> <p>Beyond Hashtags: Chapter 4</p> <p>franzke, aline shakti, Bechmann, Anja, Zimmer, Michael, Ess, Charles, and the Association of Internet Researchers. Internet research ethical guidelines 3.0. Aoir.org, 2020, https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf</p> <p>Bailey, Moya. "#transform(ing)DH Writing and Research: An Autoethnography of Digital Humanities and Feminist Ethics." <i>digital humanities quarterly</i> 9, no. 2 (2015). http://www.digitalhumanities.org//dhq/vol/9/2/000209/000209.html</p> <p>Spiro, Lisa. "'This is why we fight': Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities." <i>Debates in the Digital Humanities</i>, edited by Matthew Gold, University of Minnesota Press, 2012, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untilted-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfb1e/section/9e014167-c688-43ab-8b12-0f6746095335</p> | |
| 9 | October 19 Continuing Orange and Gephi | <p>Hashtag Activism: Conclusion / Afterword</p> <p>Beyond Hashtags: Conclusion and Methodological Appendix</p> <p>Jørgensen, Rikke Frank. "Introduction." <i>Human rights in the age of platforms</i>. The MIT Press, 2019.</p> | |

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| 10 | October 26 Advanced Twitter Scraping | <p>Ahmed, Wasim, Bath, Peter, and Demartini, Gianluca. (2017). Using Twitter as a data source: An overview of ethical, legal, and methodological challenges. In: The Ethics of Online Research. Advances in Research Ethics and Integrity (2). Emerald, pp. 79-107.</p> <p>Guha, Pallavi. "Hash tagging but not trending: The success and failure of the news media to engage with online feminist activism in India." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i> 15.1 (2015): 155-157.</p> | Advanced Analysis (11/1) |
| 11 | November 2 Critical Discourse Analysis | <p>Brock, Andre. "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis." <i>New Media & Society</i> 20, no. 3 (2018): 1012-30.</p> <p>Vie, Stephanie. "In defense of 'slacktivism': The Human Rights Campaign Facebook logo as digital activism." <i>First Monday</i>, 19(4). https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4961</p> | |
| 12 | November 9 Data Visualization | <p>Joel Nantais, "Can you tell your data story?" https://towardsdatascience.com/can-you-tell-your-data-story-154417a33efb</p> <p>Dipanjan Sarkar, "A Comprehensive Guide to the Grammar of Graphics for Effective Visualization of Multi-dimensional Data" https://towardsdatascience.com/a-comprehensive-guide-to-the-grammar-of-graphics-for-effective-visualization-of-multi-dimensional-1f92b4ed4149</p> <p>Hadley Wickham, "A Layered Grammar of Graphics."</p> | |
| 13 | November 16 IRB & Ethics | Review the UCF IRB website and your peer's proposal for feedback. | Study Proposal (11/15) |
| 14 | November 23 Proposal Revisions | Process your proposal feedback & begin the revision process using the tips in the module. | Peer Feedback (11/22) |

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| 15 | November 30 Finishing Your Findings | Focus on completing your findings! | Engagement Self-Assessment (11/30) |
| 16 | December 7 | Preliminary Findings Due | Findings Due (12/7) |

Required Statement Regarding COVID-19

To protect members of our community, everyone is required to wear a facial covering inside all common spaces including classrooms (<https://policies.ucf.edu/documents/PolicyEmergencyCOVIDReturnPolicy.pdf>). Students who choose not to wear facial coverings will be asked to leave the classroom by the instructor. If they refuse to leave the classroom or put on a facial covering, they may be considered disruptive (please see the Golden Rule for student behavior expectations). Faculty have the right to cancel class if the safety and well-being of class members are in jeopardy. Students will be responsible for the material that would have been covered in class as provided by the instructor.

Depending on the course of the pandemic during the semester, the university may make changes to the way classes are offered. If that happens, please look for announcements or messages in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email about changes specific to this course.

COVID-19 and Illness Notification – Students who believe they may have a COVID-19 diagnosis should contact UCF Student Health Services (407-823-2509) so proper contact tracing procedures can take place.

Students should not come to campus if they are ill, are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID, or if anyone living in their residence has tested positive or is sick with COVID-19 symptoms. CDC guidance for COVID-19 symptoms is located here: (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

Students should contact their instructor(s) as soon as possible if they miss class for any illness reason to discuss reasonable adjustments that might need to be made. When possible, students should contact their instructor(s) before missing class.

In Case of Faculty Illness – If the instructor falls ill during the semester, there may be changes to this course, including having a backup instructor take over the course. Please look for announcements or mail in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email for any alterations to this course.

Course Accessibility and Disability COVID-19 Supplemental Statement – Accommodations may need to be added or adjusted should this course shift from an on-campus to a remote format. Students with disabilities should speak with their instructor and should contact sas@ucf.edu to discuss specific accommodations for this or other courses.